

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for using a computer to facilitate a sales transaction for the purchase of a product/service by a group of buyers from at least one seller, comprising:

receiving into the computer requests to purchase the product/service by buyers of the group;

forming a collective request for the purchase of the product/service based upon the received buyer requests to purchase the product/service;

sending the collective request to the at least one seller;

receiving a suggested price quotation for the product/service from the at least one seller;

notifying an agent entity of the received suggested price quotation price;

receiving purchase authorization from at least one buyer in the group to buy the product/service at the received suggested price quotation.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the agent entity is one of a buyer in the group or the group.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

collecting payment information from the at least one buyer in the group who is interested in buying the product/service at the received suggested price quotation; and

sending the collected payment information to the at least one seller.

4. The method of claim 3 wherein the payment information is in the form of a credit card number for the at least one buyer in the group who is interested in buying the product/service.

1 5. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 receiving another suggested price quotation for the product/service from at
3 least another seller; and
4 notifying the agent entity of the received another suggested price quotation.

1 *Int 2.37* 6. The method of claim 5, further comprising:
2 allowing the at least another seller to review the received price quotation
3 for the product/service from the at least one seller.

1 7. The method of claim 1 in which said computer is configured to
2 restrict buyers in the group to buyers matching a requirements list.

1 *Int 2.37* 8. The method of claim 7 wherein the requirements list includes as a
2 requirement that more than one buyer in the group have a common employer.

1 9. The method of claim 1 wherein sending the collective request to the
2 at least one seller further comprises a price reduction request for the product/service
3 based on a number of buyers in the group.

1 10. The method of claim 9 wherein the price reduction request further
2 includes a preexisting group discount rate of the at least one seller.

1 *Int 2.47* 11. The method of claim 1 wherein the received suggested price
2 quotation is based on a number of buyers in the group.

1 12. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 receiving into the computer a group buy setup characteristics data set that
3 includes at least one of price targets for the product/service, buyer deadlines for joining
4 the group, buyer deadlines for submitting purchase authorization, and deadlines for
5 closing the sales transaction.

1 13. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 2 providing a setup tool that facilitates receiving group buy setup
 3 characteristics data that includes at least one of price targets for the product/service,
 4 buyer deadlines for joining the group, and buyer deadlines for receiving purchase
 5 authorization.

1 14. The method of claim 1 wherein the computer is connected to an
 2 electronic network and wherein the received requests to purchase the product/service are
 3 ~~received over the electronic network.~~

1 15. The method of claim 14 wherein the electronic network is at least
 2 one of the World Wide Web, the Internet, or an intranet.

1 16. The method of claim 14 wherein the received requests to purchase
 2 the product/service are received in a secured format.

1 17. The method of claim 1 wherein the computer is connected to an
 2 electronic network and wherein the received suggested price quotation for the
 3 product/service is received over the electronic network.

1 18. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 2 providing the agent entity with pre-negotiated prices for the product/service
 3 from the at least one seller.

1 19. The method of claim 1 wherein notifying the agent entity of the
 2 received suggested price quotation comprises sending a message to the agent entity in a
 3 format of at least one of an e-mail message, an Internet immediate message, a voice
 4 message, a beeper message, or a facsimile message.

1 20. A method for using a computer to facilitate a sales transaction for
2 the purchase of a product/service from at least one seller, comprising:

3 receiving from the at least one seller at least one of an agreed price for the
4 product/service or a price reduction for the product/service for at least one group size;

5 receiving into the computer requests to purchase the product/service by
6 buyers, the buyers collectively forming a group;

7 monitoring the group to determine if the group has attained the at least one
8 group size; and

9 providing payment information to the at least one seller if the group attains
10 the at least one group size.

1 21. The method of claim 20, further comprising:
2 requesting the at least one seller to honor the at least one of an agreed price
3 for the product/service or the price reduction for the product/service for the at least one
4 group size.

1 22. The method of claim 20, further comprising:
2 collecting payment information from buyers in the group who have
3 submitted requests to purchase the product/service.

1 23. The method of claim 22 wherein the payment information is in the
2 form of a credit card number for each buyer of the buyers in the group who are interested
3 in buying the product/service.

1 24. The method of claim 20, further comprising:
2 receiving another suggested price quotation for the product/service from at
3 least another seller; and
4 notifying at least one buyer in the group of the received another suggested
5 price quotation.

1 *put 27* 25. The method of claim 20, further comprising:
2 allowing at least another seller to review the at least one of an agreed price
3 for the product/service or the price reduction for the product/service for at least one group
4 size from the at least one seller.

1 26. The method of claim 20 in which said computer is configured to
2 restrict buyers in the group to buyers matching a requirements list.

1 *put 27* 27. The method of claim 26 wherein the requirements list includes as a
2 requirement that more than one buyer in the group have a common employer.

1 28. The method of claim 20, further comprising:
2 receiving into the computer group buy setup characteristics data that
3 includes at least one of buyer deadlines for joining the group, buyer deadlines for
4 submitting purchase authorization, and deadlines for closing the sales transaction.

1 29. The method of claim 20, further comprising:
2 providing a setup tool that facilitates receiving group buy setup
3 characteristics data that includes at least one of buyer deadlines for joining the group and
4 buyer deadlines for receiving purchase authorization.

1 30. The method of claim 20 wherein the computer is connected to an
2 electronic network and wherein the received requests to purchase the product/service are
3 received over the electronic network.

1 31. The method of claim 20 wherein the electronic network is at least
2 one of the World Wide Web, the Internet, or an intranet.

1 32. The method of claim 31 wherein the received requests to purchase
2 the product/service are received in a secured format.

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33. The method of claim 20 wherein the computer is connected to an electronic network and wherein the payment information is provided to the at least one seller over the electronic network.

34. The method of claim 20, further comprising:
notifying at least one buyer in the group that the group has attained the at least one group size.

35. The method of claim 34 wherein the buyer in the group is notified via at least one of an e-mail message, an Internet immediate message, a voice message, a beeper message, and a facsimile message.

put 297 36. A computer-readable data transmission medium containing a data structure that facilitates a sales transaction with a seller comprising:

(a) a first portion that specifies a product/service for purchase by a group comprised of more than one buyer;

(b) a second portion that specifies a collective request by the group to the purchase of the product/service;

(c) a third portion that requests price information for the product/service from the seller;

(d) a fourth portion that specifies a time interval for which the collective request remains active; and

(e) a fifth portion that specifies at least a minimum sales quantity of the product/service for which a price information is requested.

37. The computer-readable data transmission medium of claim 36, further comprising:

(f) a sixth portion that specifies price information provided by a competing seller of the product/service.

1 38. The computer-readable data transmission medium of claim 36,
2 further comprising:

3 (f) a sixth portion that specifies a number of buyers in the group.

1 *Put a10* 39. The computer-readable data transmission medium of claim 36
2 wherein the first through fifth portions are configured for transmission to the seller in an
3 ~~integral transmission.~~

1 40. A computer-readable data transmission medium containing a data
2 structure that facilitates a sales transaction with a buyer comprising:

3 (a) a first portion that specifies a product/service for which purchase has
4 been requested by the buyer;

5 (b) a second portion that identifies a group into which the buyer's
6 purchase request has been joined with other purchase requests for the same
7 product/service;

8 (c) a third portion that identifies a price quotation for the
9 product/service received from a seller; and

10 (d) a fourth portion that asks the buyer if the buyer will commit to
11 purchasing the product/service at the identified price quotation from the seller.

1 41. The computer-readable data transmission medium of claim 40,
2 further comprising:

3 (e) a fifth portion that solicits purchase information from the buyer if the
4 buyer is willing to commit to the purchase of the product/service.

1 42. The computer-readable data transmission medium of claim 40,
2 further comprising:

3 (e) a fifth portion that informs the buyer of a time period within which
4 the buyer must respond or be assumed to have made a purchase decision.

1 43. The computer-readable data transmission medium of claim 42
2 wherein the purchase decision is one of purchasing the product/service or declining to
3 purchase the product/service.

1 44. The computer-readable data transmission medium of claim 40
2 wherein the first through fourth portions are configured for transmission to the buyer in
3 an integral transmission.

1 45. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable
2 instructions for using a computer to facilitate a sales transaction for the purchase of a
3 product/service by a group of buyers from at least one seller, comprising:

4 receiving into the computer requests to purchase the product/service by
5 buyers of the group;

6 forming a collective request for the purchase of the product/service based
7 upon the received buyer requests to purchase the product/service;

8 sending the collective request to the at least one seller;

9 receiving a suggested price quotation for the product/service from the at
10 least one seller;

11 notifying an agent entity of the received suggested price quotation; and

12 receiving purchase authorization from at least one buyer in the group to buy
13 the product/service at the received suggested price quotation.

1 46. The computer-readable medium of claim 45 wherein the agent entity
2 is one of a buyer in the group or the group.

1 47. The computer-readable medium of claim 45, further comprising:
2 collecting payment information for the at least one buyer in the group who
3 is interested in buying the product/service at the received suggested price quotation; and
4 sending the collected payment information to the at least one seller.

1 48. The computer-readable medium of claim 45, further comprising:
2 receiving another suggested price quotation for the product/service from at
3 least another seller; and
4 notifying the at least one buyer in the group of the received another
5 suggested price quotation.

1 49. The computer-readable medium of claim 45 wherein sending the
2 collective request to the at least one seller further comprises a price reduction request for
3 the product/service based on a number of buyers in the group.

1 50. The computer-readable medium of claim 49 wherein the price
2 reduction request further includes a preexisting group discount rate from the at least one
3 seller.

1 51. The computer-readable medium of claim 45 wherein the received
2 suggested price quotation is based on a number of buyers in the group.

1 52. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable
2 instructions for using a computer to facilitate a sales transaction for the purchase of a
3 product/service from at least one seller, comprising:

4 receiving from the at least one seller at least one of an agreed price for the
5 product/service or a price reduction for the product/service for at least one group size;

6 receiving into the computer requests to purchase the product/service by
7 buyers, the buyers collectively forming a group;

8 monitoring the group to determine if the group has attained the at least one
9 group size; and

10 providing payment information to the at least one seller if the group attains
11 the at least one group size.

1 53. The computer-readable medium of claim 52, further comprising:
 2 requesting the at least one seller to honor the at least one of an agreed price
 3 for the product/service or the price reduction for the product/service for the at least one
 4 group size.

1 54. The computer-readable medium of claim 52, further comprising:
 2 collecting payment information from buyers in the group who have
 3 submitted requests to purchase the product/service.

1 55. The computer-readable medium of claim 52 wherein the payment
 2 information is in the form of a credit card number for each buyer of the buyers in the
 3 group who are interested in buying the product/service.

1 *Def 117* 56. A system for facilitating a sales transaction for the purchase of a
 2 product/service by a group of buyers from at least one seller, comprising:
 3 a purchase request receiver configured to receive a request to purchase the
 4 product/service by at least one buyer of the group;
 5 a collective request former configured to form a collective request for the
 6 purchase of the product/service based upon the received requests to purchase the
 7 product/service;
 8 a transmitter configured to send the collective request to the at least one
 9 seller;
 10 a price quotation receiver configured to receive a suggested price quotation
 11 for the product/service from the at least one seller; and
 12 a price quotation notifier configured to notify an agent entity of the
 13 received suggested price quotation.

1 57. The system of claim 56 wherein the agent entity is at least one buyer
 2 in the group and wherein the price quotation notifier is further configured to receive

3 purchase authorization from the at least one buyer in the group who is interested in
4 buying the product/service at the received suggested price quotation.

1 58. The system of claim 56, further comprising:
2 a payment collector configured to collect payment information from the
3 buyers in the group who are interested in buying the product /service at the received
4 suggested price quotation and send the collected payment information to the at least one
5 seller.

1 59. The system of claim 58 wherein the payment collector processes
2 payment information in the form of a credit card number for the buyers in the group who
3 are interested in buying the product/service.

1 60. The system of claim 56 wherein the price quotation notifier is further
2 configured to notify the agent entity of a received another suggested price quotation if the
3 price quotation receiver receives another suggested price quotation for the
4 product/service from at least another seller.

1 61. The system of claim 56, further comprising:
2 a price quotation repository that allows at least another seller to review the
3 received price quotation for the product/service from the at least one seller.

1 62. The system of claim 56 wherein the purchase request receiver is
2 further configured to restrict buyers in the group to buyers matching a requirements list.

1 63. The system of claim 62 wherein the requirements list includes as a
2 requirement that more than one buyer in the group have a common employer.

1 64. The system of claim 56 wherein the collective request former is
2 further configured to form the collective request for the purchase of the product/service to
3 include a price reduction request for the product/service based on a number of buyers in

4 the group.

1 65. The system of claim 64 wherein the price reduction request further
2 includes a preexisting group discount rate of the at least one seller.

1 66. The system of claim 56 wherein the collective request former
2 includes a number of buyers in the group in the collective request.

1 67. The system of claim 56, further comprising:
2 a setup tool configured to establish group buy setup characteristics data that
3 includes at least one of price targets for the product/service, buyer deadlines for joining
4 the group, buyer deadlines for receiving purchase authorization, and deadlines for closing
5 the sales transaction.

1 68. The system of claim 56 wherein the purchase request receiver is
2 connected to an electronic network and wherein the purchase request receiver receives
3 requests to purchase the product/service over the electronic network.

1 69. The system of claim 68 wherein the electronic network is at least
2 one of the World Wide Web, the Internet, or an intranet.

1 70. The system of claim 68 wherein the purchase request receiver is
2 further configured to receive requests to purchase the product/service in a secured format.

1 71. The system of claim 56 wherein the price quotation receiver is
2 connected to an electronic network and wherein the price quotation receiver receives
3 suggested price quotations for the product/service over the electronic network.

1 72. The system of claim 56, further comprising:
2 a purchase database configured to provide the buyers of the group with pre-
3 negotiated prices for the product/service from the at least one seller.

73. The system of claim 56 wherein the price quotation notifier is further configured to notify at least one buyer in the group of the received suggested price quotation by preparing a message to the buyer in a format of at least one of an e-mail message, Internet immediate message, voice message, beeper message, and facsimile message.

74. A system for facilitating a sales transaction for the purchase of a product/service from at least one seller, comprising:

a memory configured to retain at least one of an agreed price for the product/service from the at least one seller or a price reduction for the product/service for at least one group size from the at least one seller;

a purchase request receiver configured to receive requests to purchase the product/service by buyers, the buyers collectively forming a group;

a group monitor configured to monitor the group to determine if the group has attained the at least one group size; and

a payment provider configured to provide payment information to the at least one seller if the group monitor indicates that the group has attained the at least one group size.

75. The system of claim 74, further comprising:

a sale manager configured to request the at least one seller to honor the at least one of an agreed price for the product/service or the price reduction for the product/service for the at least one group size.

76. The system of claim 74, further comprising:

a payment collector configured to collect payment information from buyers in the group who have submitted requests to purchase the product/service.

77. The method of claim 76 wherein the payment information is in the

2 form of a credit card number for each buyer in the group who is interested in buying the
3 product/service.

1 78. The system of claim 74 wherein the memory is further configured to
2 retain another suggested price quotation for the product/service from at least another
3 seller, the system further comprising:

4 a price notifier configured to notify each of the buyers in the group of the
5 received another suggested price quotation.

1 79. The system of claim 74 wherein the memory is further configured to
2 allow at least another seller to review the at least one of an agreed price for the
3 product/service or the price reduction for the product/service for at least one group size
4 from the at least one seller.

1 *put 13* 80. The system of claim 74 in which the purchase request receiver is
2 configured to restrict buyers in the group to buyers matching a requirements list.

1 81. The method of claim 80 wherein the requirements list includes as a
2 requirement that more than one buyer in the group have a common employer.

1 82. The system of claim 74, further comprising:
2 a setup tool configured to provide a group buy setup characteristics data
3 that includes at least one of buyer deadlines for joining the group, buyer deadlines for
4 receiving purchase authorization, and deadlines for closing the sales transaction.

1 83. The system of claim 74 wherein the purchase request receiver is
2 connected to an electronic network and wherein the purchase request receiver is further
3 configured to receive requests to purchase the product/service over the electronic
4 network.

1 84. The system of claim 83 wherein the electronic network is at least

2 one of the World Wide Web, the Internet, or an intranet.

1 85. The system of claim 83 wherein the purchase request receiver is
2 further configured to receive requests to purchase the product/service in a secured format.

1 86. The system of claim 74 wherein the payment provider is connected
2 to an electronic network and wherein the payment provider is further configured to
3 provide the payment information to the at least one seller over the electronic network.

1 87. The system of claim 74, further comprising:
2 a group-buying notifier configured to notify at least one buyer in the group
3 that the group has attained the at least one group size.

1 88. The system of claim 87 wherein the at least one buyer is notified via
2 at least one of an e-mail message, Internet immediate message, voice message, beeper
3 message, and facsimile message.

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